

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY DECLARES SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK MARCH 14-20 *Tornado drills in schools and government buildings to be held March 17*

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley has declared March 14-20 as Severe Weather Awareness Week in North Carolina, with Wednesday, March 17, as the designated day for statewide tornado drills in government buildings and schools.

Easley asks residents to take a few minutes during the observance to review the N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety's recommendations on protective actions on tornadoes and other damaging storms.

"Tornadoes can occur with little or no warning, and you may have only a short time to make life-or-death decisions," Easley said. "North Carolina was fortunate last year in that no fatalities occurred from the 31 tornadoes that touched down, but there were two known injuries and \$2.9 million in damage from these twisters."

Last year in North Carolina, the National Weather Service issued 86 tornado warnings, 823 severe thunderstorm warnings and 343 flash flood warnings. There were 397 incidents of severe thunderstorm winds of 60 miles per hour or greater with 11 injuries, and 411 severe hail incidents. The state also had one major hurricane, six severe winter storms including an ice storm, five fatal lightning strikes and seven flood-related fatalities in North Carolina.

Secretary Bryan Beatty of CCPS said the safest place during a tornado is underground in a basement or storm cellar.

"If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or smaller inner room without windows such as a bathroom or closet," Beatty said. "Try to find something sturdy you can get under to protect yourself from flying debris or a collapsed roof."

If a tornado is outside and no shelter is available, lie on the ground, in a ditch or depression if possible. "Use your arms to protect your head and neck," Beatty said.

Residents are encouraged to listen to local radio, television, a weather channel or a NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) radio for information on severe weather.

(more)

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